

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1                   1.       A computer implemented method of transferring funds from one  
2 online account to another, the method comprising the steps of:  
3                   receiving a transfer request from a first user, the transfer request including  
4 an amount of funds for transfer from a first online account associated with the first user  
5 and identification information for a recipient of the funds, the identification information  
6 including an electronic message address for the recipient;  
7                   automatically sending an electronic message to the recipient using the  
8 electronic message address, the electronic message indicating that funds are ready for  
9 transfer to the recipient;  
10                  receiving a response from the recipient accepting or rejecting the transfer  
11 of funds; and  
12                  transferring said amount of funds from the first account to a second  
13 account associated with the recipient if the response indicates acceptance.

1                   2.       The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic message address is  
2 an e-mail address, and wherein the electronic message is an e-mail message.

1                   3.       The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic message address  
2 includes a user ID associated with the recipient, and wherein the step of automatically  
3 sending an electronic message includes initiating an instant message session with the  
4 recipient based on the user ID.

1                   4.       The method of claim 1, wherein the response includes a request by  
2 the recipient to open an account, and wherein the method further includes the step of  
3 opening the second account for the recipient.

1                   5.       The method of claim 1, wherein the response from the recipient  
2 includes information identifying the second account.

1                   6.       The method of claim 1, wherein the transfer request further  
2 includes a request for identity confirmation, and wherein the response from the recipient  
3 includes identity information responsive to the request for identity confirmation, the  
4 method further including the steps of:  
5                   automatically sending the identity information to the first user; and  
6                   receiving from the first user an acceptance or a rejection of the identity  
7 information;  
8                   wherein funds are transferred only if an acceptance is received from the  
9 first user.

1                   7.       The method of claim 6, wherein the request for identity  
2 confirmation includes a query, and wherein the identity information from the recipient  
3 includes an answer to the query.

1                   8.       The method of claim 1, further including the step of opening the  
2 first account in response to a request from the first user to open the first account.

1                   9.       The method of claim 8, wherein the step of opening the first  
2 account includes:  
3                   receiving credit card account information from the first user;  
4                   establishing a connection with a server associated with the credit card  
5 account; and  
6                   transferring funds from the credit card account to the first account.

1                   10.      The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
2                   receiving credit card account information from the recipient;  
3                   establishing a connection with a server associated with the credit card  
4 account; and

5                   transferring funds from the second account to the credit card account in  
6   response to a withdrawal request received from the recipient.

1                   11.     The method of claim 1, wherein the method is implemented in a  
2   host server, and wherein the electronic message includes a URL link to the host server.

1                   12.     A computer implemented method of transferring funds from one  
2   online account to another, the method comprising the steps of:  
3                   receiving a payment request from a first user, the payment request  
4   including an amount of funds for transfer to an online account associated with the first  
5   user and identification information for a recipient of the payment request (payor), the  
6   identification information including an electronic message address of the payor;  
7                   automatically sending an electronic message to the payor using the  
8   electronic message address, the electronic message including the amount of funds to be  
9   transferred to the first user;  
10                  receiving a payment response from the payor indicating acceptance or  
11   rejection of the payment request;  
12                  sending a second electronic message to the first user indicating whether  
13   the payment response from the recipient indicates acceptance or rejection of the payment  
14   request; and if the payment response indicates acceptance:  
15                  receiving a transfer request from the first user indicating that the funds be  
16   transferred to an identified online account associated with the first user; and  
17                  transferring funds to the identified online account from a second account  
18   associated with the payor in response to the transfer request.

1                   13.     The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic message address is  
2   an e-mail address, and wherein the electronic message is an e-mail message.

1                   14.     The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic message address  
2 includes a user ID associated with the payer, and wherein the step of automatically  
3 sending an electronic message includes initiating an instant message session with the  
4 payer based on the user ID.

1                   15.     The method of claim 12, wherein if the payment response from the  
2 payor indicates acceptance of the payment request, the payment response further includes  
3 a request for identity confirmation, and wherein the transfer request from the first user  
4 includes identity information responsive to the request for identity confirmation, the  
5 method further including the steps of:

6                   automatically sending the identity information to the payor; and  
7                   receiving from the payor an acceptance or a rejection of the identity  
8 information;

9                   wherein funds are transferred only if an acceptance of the identity  
10 information is received from the payor.

1                   16.     The method of claim 12, further including the step of transferring  
2 funds from the identified online account to a user identified credit card account in  
3 response to a request from the first user to withdraw funds from the identified online  
4 account.

1                   17.     The method of claim 12, wherein the payment response further  
2 includes information identifying the second account associated with the payor.

1                   18.     The method of claim 12, wherein the payment response includes a  
2 request to open an account for the payor, the method further including the steps of:  
3                   opening the second account; and  
4                   depositing funds into the second account.

1                   19.     The method of claim 18, wherein the step of depositing funds  
2 includes the steps of:  
3                   receiving credit card account information from the payor;  
4                   establishing a connection with a server associated with the credit card  
5 account; and  
6                   transferring funds from the credit card account to the second account.

1                   20.     The method of claim 12, wherein the method is implemented in a  
2 host server, and wherein the electronic message includes a URL link to the host server.

1                   21.     The method of claim 12, wherein a plurality of online accounts are  
2 associated with the first user, and wherein the identified account is one of the plurality of  
3 online accounts.

1                   22.     The method of claim 21, further including the step of transferring  
2 funds from the identified account to a different one of said plurality of accounts in  
3 response to a request from the first user.

1                   23.     In a computer network, a computer system communicably coupled  
2 to a database of user accounts, the user accounts including values representing funds  
3 maintained by a financial institution on behalf of the users, the computer system  
4 executing code for updating the values in the user accounts, the code including  
5 instructions for:  
6                   processing a transfer request received by the computer system from a first  
7 user over the network, the transfer request including an amount of funds for transfer from  
8 a first user account associated with the first user and identification information for a  
9 second user, the identification information including an electronic message address for  
10 the second user;

11                    automatically sending an electronic message to the second user using the  
12 electronic message address, the electronic message indicating that funds are ready for  
13 transfer to the second user;  
14                    processing a response received from the second user to determine whether  
15 the second user has accepted or rejected the transfer of funds; and  
16                    updating the values of the first user account and a second user account  
17 associated with the second user to reflect that the amount of funds was transferred from  
18 the first user to the second user if the response indicates acceptance.

1                    24.     The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic message address is  
2 an e-mail address, and wherein the electronic message is an e-mail message.

1                    25.     The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic message address  
2 includes a user ID associated with the second user, and wherein the step of automatically  
3 sending an electronic message includes initiating an instant message session with the  
4 second user based on the user ID.

1                    26.     The computer system of claim 23, wherein the response includes a  
2 request by the second user to open an account, and wherein the code further includes  
3 instructions for opening the second account for the second user.

1                    27.     The computer system of claim 23, wherein the response from the  
2 second user includes information identifying the second account.

1                    28.     The computer system of claim 23, wherein the transfer request  
2 further includes a request for identity confirmation, and wherein the response from the  
3 second user includes identity information responsive to the request for identity  
4 confirmation, the code further including instructions for:

5 automatically sending the identity information to the first user; and  
6 processing a second response received from the first user indicating  
7 acceptance or rejection of the identity information;  
8 wherein the values are updated only if the second response indicates  
9 acceptance.

1 29. The computer system of claim 28 , wherein the request for identity  
2 confirmation includes a query, and wherein the identity information from the second user  
3 includes an answer to the query.

1 30. In a computer network, a computer system communicably coupled  
2 to a database of user accounts, the user accounts including values representing funds  
3 maintained by a financial institution on behalf of the users, the computer system  
4 executing code for updating the values in the user accounts, the code including  
5 instructions for:

6 processing a payment request received from a first user over the network,  
7 the payment request including an amount of funds for transfer to a first user account  
8 associated with the first user and identification information for a second user, the  
9 identification information including an electronic message address for the second user;  
10 automatically sending an electronic message to the second user using the  
11 electronic message address, the electronic message including the amount of funds to be  
12 transferred to the first user;

13 processing a payment response received from the second to determine  
14 whether the second user has accepted or rejected the payment request;

15 sending a second electronic message to the first user indicating whether  
16 the payment response from the recipient indicates acceptance or rejection of the payment  
17 request; and if the payment response indicates acceptance:

18 processing a transfer request received from the first user to determine a  
19 user account identified by the first user; and

20 updating the values of the identified account and a second user account  
21 associated with the second user to reflect that the amount of funds was transferred from  
22 the second user to the first user.

1                   31.     The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic message address is  
2     an e-mail address, and wherein the electronic message is an e-mail message.

1                   32.     The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic message address  
2     includes a user ID associated with the second user, and wherein the step of automatically  
3     sending an electronic message includes initiating an instant message session with the  
4     second user based on the user ID.

1                   33.     The computer system of claim 30, wherein if the payment response  
2     from the second user indicates acceptance of the payment request, the payment response  
3     further includes a request for identity confirmation, and wherein the transfer request from  
4     the first user includes identity information responsive to the request for identity  
5     confirmation, and wherein the code further includes instructions for:  
6                   automatically sending the identity information to the second user; and  
7                   processing a second response received from the second user to determine  
8     whether the identity information was accepted or rejected;  
9                   wherein values are updated only if the identity information was accepted.

1                   34.     The computer system of claim 30, wherein the payment response  
2     includes a request by the second user to open an account, and wherein the code further  
3     includes instructions for opening the second account for the second user.

1                   35.     The computer system of claim 30, wherein the payment response  
2     from the second user includes information identifying the second account.



1                   36.     A computer implemented method of transferring funds between  
2 user accounts in a computer network including two or more affiliate banks, wherein the  
3 affiliate banks conduct fund transfer settlements, the method comprising the steps of:  
4                   receiving a transfer request to transfer funds from a first online account  
5 associated with a first user to a second online account associated with a second user,  
6 wherein the transfer request includes a bank identifier that identifies a first one of the  
7 affiliate banks; and  
8                   transferring funds from the first online account to the second online  
9 account after the second user has approved the transfer request;  
10                  wherein the first affiliate bank conducts the fund transfer settlement for the  
11 transferred funds on behalf of the first user.

1                   37.     The method of claim 36, wherein the settlement includes one of an  
2 ACH transaction, a check card transaction and a credit card transaction.

1                   38.     The method of claim 36, wherein the transfer request includes an  
2 electronic message address for the second user, wherein the method further includes the  
3 step of automatically sending an electronic message to the second user using the  
4 electronic message address, wherein the electronic message indicates that funds are ready  
5 for transfer to the second user.

1                   39.     The method of claim 38, wherein the electronic message address is  
2 an e-mail address, and wherein the electronic message is an e-mail message.

1                   40.     The method of claim 38, wherein the electronic message address  
2 includes a user ID associated with the second user, and wherein the step of automatically  
3 sending an electronic message includes initiating an instant message session with the  
4 second user based on the user ID.

1                   41.     The method of claim 36, further including the step of receiving a  
2     second bank identifier from the second user, the second bank identifier identifying one of  
3     the affiliate banks for conducting fund transfer settlement on behalf of the second user.

1                   42.     The method of claim 41, wherein the first and second bank  
2     identifiers indicate the same affiliate bank.

1                   43.     A computer implemented method of transferring funds between  
2     user online accounts in a computer network, the method comprising the steps of:  
3                   receiving registration information from a first user for establishing a first  
4     online account, the registration information including a physical mailing address;  
5                   setting a transaction limit on the first account to a first value; thereafter  
6                   receiving a confirmation code from the first user, wherein the confirmation  
7     code confirms that the physical mailing address is a valid address; and thereafter  
8                   increasing the transaction limit on the first online account to a second  
9     value.

1                   44.     The method of claim 43, further comprising the step of:  
2                   causing the confirmation code to be sent to the physical mailing address.

1                   45.     The method of claim 43, wherein the second value is selected by  
2     the first user.

1                   46.     The method of claim 43, wherein the physical mailing address is  
2     associated with a billing address for one of a credit card account and an ATM check card  
3     account.

1                    47.     The method of claim 43, wherein the registration information and  
2     confirmation code are received from the first user over the Internet.